

# ANACONDA TIMES

JANUARY 3, 2007

PROUDLY SERVING LSA ANACONDA

## HISTORY

Ancient monastery offers Soldiers insight into Iraq history

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## Helping Hands

Mosul-based logisticians help local communities

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Spc. Austin Davis stands with Spc. Lacyde Arnold after he thanks her for reacting quickly and helping him and a passenger in the back exit the vehicle safely. Arnold, driver of the vehicle, opened the door to allow Davis to exit and receive medical attention.

## Proper equipment helps save Soldier's life

by Sgt. Kevin McSwain

**Anaconda Times Staff**

**MOSUL, Iraq**—Personal protection equipment and training saved a Soldier from serious harm recently during an attack on a convoy here.

"I would be in bad shape if I wasn't wearing my eye protection," said Spc. Austin S. Davis, just hours after being injured by an explosive device during a mission here.

Davis, a driver and gunner for 1st platoon, 1345th Transportation Company, said his protective equipment and the training of the Soldiers around him are the reasons he was able to walk around less than 12 hours after the attack.

During a routine convoy to carry cargo and passengers to another forward operating base, Davis's vehicle was struck by an explosive device, causing moderate damage to the front passenger side of the vehicle.

See, **SAVED**, Page 11

# Keep em' Movin'

**Big Red One Soldiers keep roads clear of bad guys**

*"We serve because we believe in our country and everything it stands for."*

- Sgt. 1st Class Tracy Newlin



White House photo by Eric Draper

## One American hero recognized

President George W. Bush presents a Purple Heart to Sgt. John Kriesel, assigned to the B Company, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 136th Infantry Regiment, during a visit Friday, Dec. 22, 2006, to Walter Reed Army Medical Center where the Minnesota National Guardsman is recovering from injuries suffered during a Dec. 2 improvised explosive attack near Fallujah. Kriesel's unit is assigned to the 1st Brigade, 34th Infantry Division, which provides security for logistical convoys for the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary). Looking on with Mrs. Laura Bush is Sgt. Kriesel's wife, Katie, holding their 4-year-old son Broden and 5-year-old son Elijah. Spc. Bryan McDonough and Spc. Corey Rystad, were both killed in the blast.

**"I will always place the mission first."**

I am Sgt. Cody Seder, from Okeechobee, Fla.

3-4 Air Defense Artillery Regiment >>

Counter rocket artillery mortar operator





# VILLAGE RECEIVES TOYS, SUPPLIES

## 45th Sustainment Brigade Soldiers open hearts, adopt local community

story and photo by Sgt. Kevin McSwain

**MOSUL, Iraq**—Soldiers from the 352nd Corps Support Battalion delivered toys and school supplies to a Christian village during a humanitarian mission Dec. 18 here.

The 352nd, a battalion assigned to the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), visited Pishabur, a small village near the Syrian border and passed out gifts to children.

The company currently supports the 25th Infantry Division for logistical missions.

"We received donations from friends and family in the United States," said Chaplain (Capt.) Mark Cisco, battalion chaplain. "We gave out soccer balls, toys, and baby beanies."

The humanitarian mission occurred just in time for the season of giving, and he said this would not have been possible if so many people didn't sacrifice their time.

"It took a long time to coordinate this particular mission," he said. "We wanted to deliver the gifts before Christmas, and if it wasn't for our families back home working hard, this would not have been possible."

The goal of the mission was to promote community relations and show citizens of the village that servicemembers are here to

help.

"Community relations is very important to our mission," said Maj. Danny Robles, executive officer for the 352nd.

"We are showing the people in this village that we are here to help them, and hopefully they will cooperate during future missions in their area."

Cisco said the choice to visit this village was not by chance. A liaison, a contractor who lives in the area, talks to the local leaders and picks what village servicemembers will visit.

"We coordinate these missions with the help of the local leaders and people of influence in the community," he said. "They tell us what problems they are having in their village and we do what we can to help them."

Khaled Yago Murkus, the elected official of Pishabur, said he was honored to have servicemembers visit his village.

"This is a very special day in the history of our village," he said. "Many people here have dreamed of the day they would be able to meet an American Soldier. This was like a dream come true, and we hope this will not be the last time."

Murkus said coalition forces helped them reclaim the Christian village after losing it more than 50 years ago. He said the village has been around for more than 400 years and has been destroyed and rebuilt four

different times.

"We have had a hard time here in the past because of our beliefs," he said. "But with the help of coalition forces, we were able to reclaim our land and rebuild our village."

The mission was not only helpful to the people in the village; servicemembers were able to experience a part of Iraq they fight to protect but rarely get to see.

"This was also a good time for the Soldiers of the battalion to take time out from their regular job and actually see what kind of affect they have on the local population," Robles said.

He said Soldiers are able to volunteer for these missions in addition to their regular duties, and he feels it is an

experience every servicemember should be able to enjoy.

"Missions like this help Soldiers see a purpose for being



Spc. Gilbert Galman hands a stuffed animal to a child in the crowd during a humanitarian mission on Dec. 18 in northern Iraq.

## ANACONDA TIMES

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411 Engineer Brigade  
164th Corps Support Group  
657th Area Support Group

1/34 Brigade Combat Team  
45th Sustainment Brigade  
82nd Sustainment Brigade  
593rd Corps Support Group  
15th Sustainment Brigade



# Special team helps Soldiers during deployments with stress

by Sgt. Gary A. Witte

**Anaconda Times Staff Writer**

**LSA ANACONDA, Iraq** – Stress can be more common than sand for servicemembers in a combat zone. And the hidden problems that accompany stress can range from the minor to the catastrophic.

“It’s very common to be overwhelmed by the stressors they face here,” Sgt. John McKenzie, assistant NCOIC for the 113th Medical Company (Combat Stress Control), said. “Especially those who go outside the wire. They’re basically reacting normally to an abnormal situation.”

The Combat Stress Control Clinic is a plain building set back from New Jersey Avenue, but it doesn’t go unnoticed. People walk through its doors every day seeking the support available there.

“We do not close,” McKenzie said, noting the clinic is open 24 hours a day. “We’re here for Soldiers any time they need us.”

A sergeant from Texas, who asked not to be identified, came to the clinic a couple of months ago after he was told he was screaming in his sleep. A veteran of previous deployments, he believed he was having nightmares, but couldn’t remember them afterwards.

“I was having trouble sleeping,” he said. “I would wake up exhausted.”

The sergeant said he doesn’t like to talk about the specifics of his combat experiences and he doesn’t feel like it would be fair to burden his family with them. He said the clinic gives him a place where he can unburden himself and learn techniques to help deal better with stress.

“It always helps to have someone listen and ask the right questions,” he said. “You know they want to know what you have to say.”

Unlike physical injuries, the symptoms of stress-related problems aren’t always obvious.

McKenzie, who is an occupational therapist assistant, said a few of the warning signs, aside from sleep loss, include decreases in appetite, an increase in agitation, inability



**Sgt. John R. McKenzie of Santa Clarita, Calif., the assistant NCOIC with the 113th Medical Company (Combat Stress Control), listens to a soldier who has come to the clinic to deal with sleepless nights caused by his combat experiences.**

to concentrate, and a withdrawal from social situations.

Those who find themselves suffering from these problems should either consult a chaplain or come to the clinic for help, McKenzie said.

No referral is required to visit the clinic and information about walk-in customers is not shared with servicemembers’ units, he added.

“We make sure we keep our clients confidential and we don’t share that information with anyone,” McKenzie said.

“We have Soldiers who just walk in and say they need someone to talk to.”

The clinic also has a three-person prevention team that visits various units on request, conducting classes ranging from suicide prevention to relaxation techniques. Such prevention teams are stationed at different Forward Operating Bases throughout Iraq, he said.

The same classes are offered at the Anaconda clinic every week, with specialized topics that also include anger management and communications skills. For example, a

class on nutrition can help someone who is having problems getting enough rest.

“If they’re eating poorly, they’re going to sleep poorly,” McKenzie said. “Which leads into other issues, such as increased stress and poor job performance.”

These classes are open to “anybody and everybody,” he said. “We’re here to help, regardless of rank, regardless of service.”

The sergeant from Texas said the stresses he has faced have not impacted his ability to do his job, but the relaxation techniques have helped him get the rest he needs. A compact disc of relaxation techniques, which includes visualization exercises and soothing music, has been particularly helpful.

“I’ve never even finished the entire track,” he said. “I’m always asleep before it ends.”

The clinic also has a three-day restoration program for extreme cases, which helps those servicemembers who are not able to carry on with their missions.

The program, which allows them to stay at the clinic, helps them revamp their coping skills and get back on track, McKenzie said.

These types of programs are particularly important for servicemembers who lose a friend in combat, he said.

In one case, a Marine who switched places with a friend in a patrol, was devastated when he was then killed by an explosive. The Marine ended up spending two weeks at the clinic.

“By the time he left here, he was ready to go on and continue with the mission,” McKenzie said.

While the assistance offered at the clinic retains a stigma for some servicemembers, the programs offer help to all services without fear of reprimands or reprisals, he said. Different people have different reactions to stress and different coping skills, he added.

“Every Soldier has a limit to their stress,” McKenzie said. “It all depends on the individual.”

Those who wish to contact the Combat Stress Control clinic can call DSN 829-1402 or send an e-mail to melissa.kale@us.army.mil.

## What’s your most memorable experience during the past year?



**Sgt. Ibar Alvarez**

“Walking away from several I.E.D.s, because I’m still alive to be with my wife.”



**Sgt. Joshua Hickman**

“Marrying my wife, starting my family of two beautiful daughters. My wife and my two daughters are my everything.”



**SpC. Franky Carpenter**

“Going to Camp Hit with four other Soldiers to provide air defense, because we were the only ones specialized to do it.”



**Pfc. Elizabeth Ecker**

“It was when my daughter took her first steps.”





Three Iraqi men listen to Soldiers during an olive tree planting ceremony with Iraqi civilians and American Soldiers



Col. Megan Tatu, commander of the 164th Corps Support Group, and Col. Christina Gayagas, deputy commander for the 13th SC(E), personally thank three Iraqi men who helped them plant the first olive trees on Anaconda



Soldiers stand with shovels ready to begin digging holes for 164 olive trees on LSA Anaconda.

# Arizona Reservists help plant a new Iraq

story and photos on Page 15



A box of olive trees is readied to be planted by 164th CSG Soldiers.



Careful hands covered the roots of the small olive trees with the dry Iraqi soil.



Col. Megan Tatu, commander of the 164th Corps Support Group, plants an olive tree as three Iraqi men plant their olive tree during a recent ceremony.

## Rememberance "I've Been to the Mountaintop"

### M a r t i n L u t h e r K i n g

JANUARY 15 FROM 11 A.M. TO 1 P.M.

MWR East Recreation Center

#### Essay Contest

- Two page, double space
- Descriptive of the man
- Discloses interesting facts
- Introduces not so well known aspects of his life
- Effects of his efforts on civil rights movement
- His MO

#### MLK 5-Kilometer Run

For more information, or to register:  
call 829-4001  
or email:  
Kathy.mckay@balad.iraq.centcom.mil  
Amanda.glade@balad.iraq.centcom.mil

#### General Information

For more information, or to help out,  
please call 829 -1915  
or email Sgt. 1st Class Leotin Kent at:  
leontin.kent@balad.iraq.centcom.mil



# Combat Stress Control

113th Medical Company (CSC)

# 829-1402

individual counseling by appointment or walk-in

command referrals

services for combat and operationally stressed soldiers

## RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

MONDAY TO SATURDAY  
3:30 TO 4 P.M.

## STRESS MANAGEMENT

MONDAY AND THURSDAY  
10 TO 11 A.M.

## HOME FRONT ISSUES

MONDAY AND THURSDAY  
5 TO 6 P.M.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

WEDNESDAY AND SATURDAY  
11 A.M. TO NOON

## ANGER MANAGEMENT

TUESDAY AND FRIDAY  
11 A.M. TO NOON

## ANXIETY AWARENESS

WEDNESDAY  
3 TO 3:30 P.M.  
SATURDAY  
10:30 TO 11 A.M.

## SLEEP HYGIENE

MONDAY AND THURSDAY  
6 TO 6:30 P.M.

## GOAL SETTING

MONDAY AND THURSDAY  
11 A.M. TO NOON

## DEPRESSION AWARENESS

WEDNESDAY  
2 TO 3 P.M.  
SATURDAY  
10 TO 10:30 A.M.

## COMMUNICATION SKILLS

TUESDAY AND FRIDAY  
10 TO 11 A.M.

## RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

WEDNESDAY  
9 TO 11 A.M.

for more information, email:  
[melissa.kale@us.army.mil](mailto:melissa.kale@us.army.mil)

# "If you ain't ammo" Ammo Airmen help put bombs on target

story by Air Force Staff Sgt. Alice Moore

photos by Airman 1st Class Chad M. Kellum

## BALAD AIR BASE, Iraq -

- If you've been around the Air Force for any length of time, you've probably heard Ammo's motto -- "If you ain't Ammo, you ain't shhhh..."

Their motto is always heard throughout here because it's AMMO's way of showing their pride in the work they do.

At Balad Air Base, the 332nd Expeditionary Maintenance Squadron munitions storage area Airmen work to ensure bombs used are functional and safe.

The munitions storage area is composed of eight functional areas that work together to maintain the integrity of the munitions stockpile, said Chief Master Sgt. Matthew Kaleikini, 332nd EMXS Ammo chief deployed from Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

"As munitions arrive on station, we have areas assigned to transport, inspect, functional test, account and report," Kaleikini said. "Once munitions are assembled, we have Airmen who transport the ammo to the flightline."

The chief also said the MSA Airmen work closely with the munitions flight's weapons Airmen to ensure bombs are ready for mission taskings.

"We're responsible for the serviceability of the munitions

stockpile here," said Staff Sgt. Michael Bell, 332nd EMXS munitions inspector deployed from Cannon Air Force Base, N.M. "This includes everything from the smallest bullets to the explosives in the F-16 egress systems."

Bell also said as an inspector he's responsible for reporting any bombs that are unserviceable to higher headquarters.

"We have to make sure the bombs work like they're designed to," he said.

"The inspectors check the form, fit, and function of the munitions."

A unique aspect of the munitions flight here is they are a good example of how the total force concept works together in a deployed environment. The active-duty Airmen assigned here are also integrated with members of the Air National Guard who are activated for 45-day deployments to support mission requirements.

"Only 25 percent of the ammo Airmen stay for the entire Air Expeditionary Force rotation," said Capt. Ben Sanchez, 332nd EMXS munitions flight commander deployed from Beale Air Force Base, Calif. "The others rotate on a 45-day basis. The senior noncommissioned officers here have done a terrific



Senior Airman Jason Williamson, 332nd Expeditionary Maintenance Squadron munitions specialist, checks the connections of a missile at Balad Air Base, Iraq Nov. 29, 2006. Airman Williamson is a Guardsman deployed from Joe Foss Field, Sioux Falls, S.D.

job of integrating everyone into the process ensuring we never falter from our assigned mission."

Bell said working with Air Guard members here has been a positive experience.

"I would say you couldn't even tell the difference from active-duty and Guard members," he said. "When they (Guard) roll

in, they mean business. We're all here to do the same job, which is putting bombs on target."

Air National Guard members activated here with the Ammo unit agree the chance to work with their active-duty counterparts has been positive.

"Being here allows us to put a real-life scenario to operations we only do on a monthly basis back at home," said Staff Sgt. Eric Ellefson, munitions technician deployed from Joe Foss Field, Sioux Falls, S.D. "Deploying here has allowed us to solidify our feelings on what the military is doing out here," he said. "Being here has helped to reinforce our positive beliefs."

"We strongly believe in the cause and we feel like we're doing our part by being here," said Tech. Sgt. Gerald Dorn, squadron munitions technician also deployed from Joe Foss Field.

When the work day is finally done, the munitions MSA Airmen here believe that being deployed is what their mission is all about.

"We finally get a chance to do what our jobs are meant for," Bell said. "If you can't be the one to drop the bombs, you might as well be the one building them."



Staff Sgt. Matt Smith and Senior Airman Jason Williamson, 332nd Expeditionary Maintenance Squadron munitions technicians, assemble a missile at Balad Air Base, Iraq Nov. 29, 2006. Both are deployed out of Joe Foss Field, Sioux Falls, S.D.



# New passenger terminal brings new comforts

by Staff Sgt. Lorin T. Smith

## 36th Combat Aviation Brigade

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq – 1st Lt. Damon Goff has a job unlike anyone else in his career field of air defense artillery.

While deployed with the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade, his assigned duty position is the officer in charge of an “Army Airline.”

It's called the Catfish Air passenger terminal, Anaconda's premier Space Available transportation system.

Instead of Goff shooting down aircraft, he's helping coordinate transportation of thousands of Soldiers each month across the Iraqi battlefield on UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters and CH-47 Chinooks.

This is important because it keeps Soldiers out of convoys and away from improvised explosive devices or small-arms fire occasionally encountered on Iraqi roads.

The busiest air passenger terminal and Space A nerve center in Iraq expects to move about 12,000 Soldiers across the Iraqi theater per month, said Goff, a 26-year-old Dallas native.

This is an increase of about 1,000 Soldiers a month more than last year.

“(Catfish Air) saves lives because flying is the safest way to travel,” Goff said.

In order to move more people, they needed a larger building.

So after almost a year of construction, a new terminal opened up Oct. 11.

Space A users can manifest themselves on a flight by submitting a Air Mission Request or calling military travel agents who can help book Space A trips or provide more information for Soldiers and civilians.

“We want to make sure that everybody, even the lowest-ranking Soldier in the Army...knows about



Photo by Staff Sgt. Lorin T. Smith  
**Soldiers relax in the new terminal with magazines and big-screen television screens while waiting for their flight.**

Catfish Air and how to use it,” Goff said.

The passenger then shows up at their nearest Space A terminal, usually about two hours before their scheduled flight's departure time.

Then they wait until their flight is called.

Sometimes not everyone is able to get on a flight due to mission changes or extenuating circumstances.

Goff noted the difficulties of “hurry up and wait” travel.

There are so many changes to the flights and as Space A, you might have to wait if another mission comes up, he said.

If extra seats are available, Goff does what he can to make sure a Soldier or civilian needing to get to a destination is on that bird.

The problem though, is that it is never that simple.

Trying to make it easier are the Catfish employees who constantly check the flights.

The Kellogg, Brown and Root civilians and Soldiers who work there equate themselves to airport ticketing agents.

They hear all sorts of gripes and groans, but customer service is the name of the game.

“We can promise that if there

is a delay or cancellation, we'll do our best to get you on the next flight out,” Goff said.

The most a passenger will have to wait for a departure is two days, said Adriane Whiteside, a logistics coordinator with KBR.

“Our job is to get you from point A to point B,” Whiteside said. “We do our job here to make sure you get your job done.”

If a traveler can't get out on a flight because of weather holdups, power outages or communication issues, and they need to make arrangements to stay on LSA Anaconda for a night, KBR can call the local “Holiday Inn” – the unofficial name for transient tent housing.

Whiteside discussed the new building's many amenities.

The egg-yoke-colored walls have two plasma televisions attached to them airing Armed Forces Network channels.

- A larger building allows more Soldiers to stay out of the heat, cold or rain.

- Hot, fresh coffee is available all hours of the day.

- A dining facility is less than 500 yards away.

- A Green Bean coffee shop is even in the works.

These are the simple things that can make a delay that much easier, she said.

Also helping to keep the operations smooth are the radio telephone operators who are the link between the helicopters and the KBR civilians.

The RTOs watch the helicopters and keep constant communication between the aircraft and KBR employees through their radios.

“We are here to ensure the Catfish Air personnel know the aircraft is here and ready to off-load and load the next set of passengers,” said Spc. Melissa Chapman, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 36th CAB.

As Chapman went back to the radio to coordinate with a helicopter dropping off passengers, the wearied travelers who had been waiting for a ride off Anaconda finally got to leave.

“Just remember that every passenger that comes through here is one more Soldier, one more Sailor, Airman, Marine we kept off the roads; and that's a good thing,” said 36th CAB Commander Col. Vernon A. Sevier, Jr., at a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new terminal recently.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Aaron Allmon II  
**Soldiers from the 1st Armored Division secure the landing zone after exiting a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, during a hunt for insurgents and weapons caches in the Al Jazeera Desert area of Iraq last March.**

## Army accelerates conversion of brigade combat teams

WASHINGTON - The Army announced last week it is accelerating the modular conversion of two active-component brigade combat teams to increase the number of combat and combat-support units available for combat and homeland-defense missions.

The 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, at Fort Riley, Kan., will pass its transition-team mission and resources to the 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, and convert to a heavy brigade combat team in April, 11 months earlier than planned. The brigade combat team will re-flag next September as the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, thereby aligning all Fort Riley units under the 1st Infantry Division.

The 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, at Fort Hood, Texas, will convert to an infantry brigade combat team in April, 17 months earlier than planned. The unit will relocate at Fort Knox, Ky., once facilities there become available. If, however, the unit is scheduled to deploy, it will return from combat to Fort Hood before moving to Fort Knox.

“The Army is steadfast in its determination to transform the total force from a Cold War structured organization into one best prepared to operate across the full spectrum of conflict; from full-scale combat to stability and reconstruction operations, including the irregular war that we face today,” said Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker.

Increasing the number of available BCTs for the ready-force pool will also help reduce stress on the current force by giving units and Soldiers a few more months at home than they presently have, known as dwell time. Currently, the ratio is one year deployed time to sometimes less than one year at home station. The Army's goal for the active component is one year deployed followed by two years at home.

The accelerated creation of the two BCTs will not require changes to the normal assignment process, and most of their Soldiers will receive permanent change of station orders next summer.



# Join the Army's premiere job as a Broadcast Journalist

The Army public affairs branch is increasing active-duty authorizations in the 46R (Broadcast Public Affairs Specialist) career field. Soldiers in the career field learn television, radio, announcing and writing skills. 50 percent of the positions are with the Armed Forces Network. It's an extremely civilian-marketable job skill.

Soldiers from any MOS are eligible.

## There are several requirements for interested Soldiers:

1. Reserve/Guard Soldiers must go on active duty to qualify.
2. Must be of the E-1 to E-5 pay grade (E-5 must be nonpromotable).
3. Have at least a 107 GT Score.
4. Must maintain a Secret clearance or an interim secret clearance.
5. Must be deployable
6. Most P2 profiles are OK, but check with the public affairs branch manager.

## A VOICE AUDITION IS MANDATORY

Interested? Please contact the public affairs branch manager, Sgt. 1st Class Jim Guzior at [goose.guzior@us.army.mil](mailto:goose.guzior@us.army.mil) for details. His phone number is (703) 325-2578 and his DSN line is (312) 221-2578.



# Ancient monastery offers Soldiers insight into Iraq history

story and photos by Spc. Amanda Solitario

**FOB MAREZ, Iraq**—Beyond the rolling hills of Mosul and tucked away from the bustle of military life on Forward Operating Base Marez, are the remains of an ancient Christian monastery.

The crumbling walls of the Dair Mar Elia, the monastery of St. Elijah, sit alongside an abandoned yard of Russian tanks and a large pile of ammunition casings. Even so, servicemembers are still able to capture the historical significance of this weathering wonder.

“Soldiers are reminded of the fact that they are operating in a place that has much history,” Chaplain (Capt.) Mark Cisco, from the 352nd Corps Support Battalion. “Just a visit to the monastery is a morale booster for Soldiers.”

Servicemembers and civilians living on the Marez compound can arrange tours with the unit ministry team or the mayor’s cell, and Cisco, from Covington, Ga., said everyone should take the opportunity to visit the site while they are here.

“I think every journey that we take outside of our comfort zone helps expand our world view,” said Spc. Darryl Bentley, a chaplain’s assistant with the 352nd CSB.

Evidence suggests that the monastery was built sometime in the 4th century, making it the oldest Christian monastery in Iraq. The construction of this place of worship predates the founding of Islam by more than 100 years, said Cisco, noting the large Christian presence in the area many years ago.

“But, any faith tradition can benefit from a visit to the monastery,” he said.

In previous years, people in the area dedicated the last Wednesday of Novemeber to Mar Elia, a European monk who devoted his life to religion and founded the monastery



**Chaplain (Capt.) Mark Cisco, the chaplain for the 352nd Corps Support Battalion, stops on the stairs of the Dair Mar Elia, an ancient Christian monastery in Mosul, and reflects on the immense history associated with the religious ruins.**

itself. Throughout the 20th century, many worshippers gathered at the site for special services until the Iraqi Army built a military base around the ruins, closing it off to the public.

Today, American servicemembers have the opportunity to see the historical site while gaining some knowledge on a small part of Iraq’s history without leaving the FOB gates.

“This is a nice little getaway for Soldiers to just come see a true part of history, and a true part of Christian history in a now

Muslim nation,” said Bentley, a resident of Hickory, N.C.

The monastery has endured a great amount of abuse through the years. Besides time and environmental damage, the Dair Mar Elia has survived many years of war.

The marble archways are caved-in and the bullet-riddled walls are covered in graffiti. Mortar fragments litter the ground, an obvious testament to the violence of its past.

During the early stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraqi’s were using the monastery as a command post. As a result, the monastery became a battleground for American and Iraqi forces.

“Just to know what this site used to do, as far as training men to do ministry, and to see the state of ruin it is in is a very sad thing,” Bentley said. “With the wrath of war, this is some of the fallout from it.”

Presently, the site is monitored and maintained by the mayor’s cell on FOB Marez. A chain-linked fence surrounds the ruins to preserve the value of the site.

As Iraq works toward a new future, obvious remnants of the country’s past still linger. Bentley said he would like to see the site restored and opened for tourism.

He said he was fortunate to visit this site and hopes others will be able to do so as well.

“My plans are to go into ministry on the civilian side,” he said. “It gives me great hope to know that God will use me in great ways if I allow him to do so.”





# Ridin' Dirty

## “GUNSLINGERS” OWN THE NIGHT

story and photos by Spc. Amanda Solitario

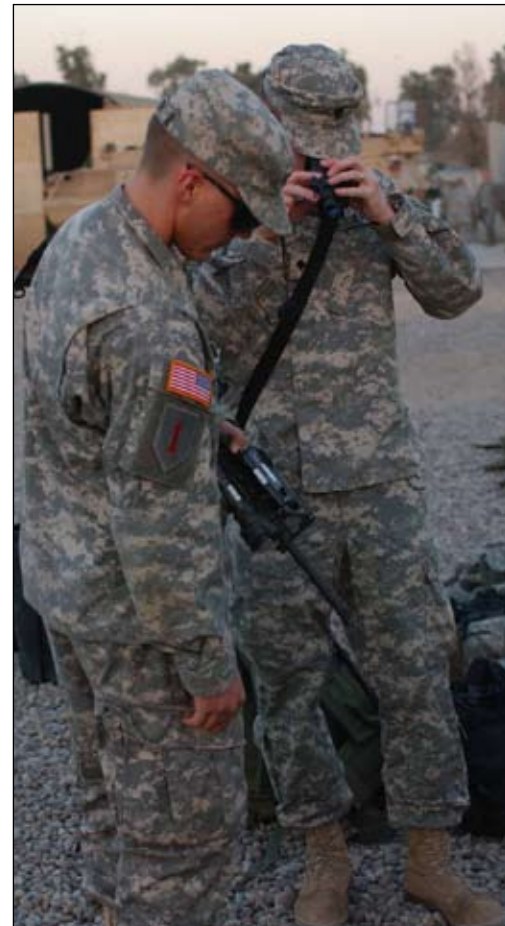


Sgt. Marshall Potts, a gunner with C. Co., 1st Battalion, 34th Armor Regiment, mounts his weapon on the top of the vehicle before heading for a night outside the wire.

**LSA ANACONDA, Iraq**—A nighttime chill begins to fill the air and as the last rays of daylight dwindle in the sky, the Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 34th Armor Regiment are just starting their day.

At the unit's motor pool, Soldiers from 4th Platoon, C. Company get geared up for another night on the road.

The 4th Platoon "Gunslingers" handle convoy security for Kellogg, Brown & Root contractors, and these Soldiers make it a priority to see that the precious military cargo gets from one base to the other—all across Iraq.



Spc. Raymond Martin (left), gunner C. Co., 1st Battalion, 34th Armor Regiment, and Spc. Brien Buckentine, a medic with the unit, inspect night vision equipment. Making sure the unit is prepared for the mission is an essential step in the operation.

The mission of the Gunslingers is more than a convoy escort. It is a major link in the overall fight to secure the future of Iraq, said Capt. Jeffery W. Jurand, company commander.

Jurand said that without the vital logistics that his Soldiers proudly protect, the maneuver forces and the Iraqi soldiers would not be able to continue their operations.

But the missions start long before the Soldiers hit the highways. There are battle drills, briefings, weapon and vehicle maintenance, and a lot of planning involved for one night outside the wire.

"If the horse isn't ready to run, we can't conduct our mission," said 1st Lt. Joshua O. Lehman, platoon leader for 4th Platoon and a native of Madera, Calif.

From meticulously polishing the windows of vehicles to fine-tuning the sights on the weapons, Lehman said the troops show up hours ahead of schedule to get everything just right.

After the final safety brief and one last practical exercise, the Soldiers load up and head out for a night of "Ridin' Dirty," as their platoon motto says.

Passing infantry foot patrols on their left and road-repairing engineers on their right, the Gunslingers push through with the supplies that will sustain those troops.

As the mix of military and civilian trucks make their way to the final destination, gunners watch the roads from their turrets while vehicle commanders call in assessments over the radios.

"You just never know what to expect," said Sgt. Marshall Potts, a gunner with the unit and a native of Texas.

Each Gunslinger has their own technique for staying focused and keeping their eyes open and on the road. For some it is handfuls of candy for a quick sugar rush, and for others, it is bottomless cups of coffee to get the caffeine pumping through the veins.



A Soldier breaks down his weapon in the early morning hours after returning from a convoy security mission. Before leaving the unit's motor pool after the completion of the mission, Soldiers disassemble equipment, perform vehicle inspections, and clean their weapons.

No matter how they do it, the vigilant Soldiers continuously scan their sectors for anything out of the ordinary, forever mindful of the civilians and supplies they are protecting.

The active duty unit from Fort Riley, Kan. runs all of their combat logistics patrols at night, and most of the Soldiers prefer it that way.

"It makes it a much more clean battlefield," Lehman said. "It is just us and the enemy."

The unit had completed several missions since their arrival in October without any enemy contact—until recently.

Lehman said the lead vehicle in one of his convoys was hit by an improvised explosive device, but fortunately, no injuries resulted.

The unit moved without hesitation to perform self-recovery on the downed vehicle and provide 360-degree security for the rest of the convoy. He said everyone knew their job, and executed flawlessly.

"We know that every time we are outside the wire the possibility exists that an IED detonation on the convoy can happen," said Sgt. 1st Class Tracy Newlin, platoon sergeant. "How we react to these situations is



As the sun sets at the motor pool, Soldiers prepare for the long night ahead of them.

everything."

Newlin, normally stationed in Kansas, said their reaction is the difference between the loss of a Soldier and completion of the mission.

Lehman said his platoon is determined not to let anything stand in their way when they are out on the road.

"We will accomplish the mission no matter the circumstances," Lehman said. "We often face KBR maintenance issues and other obstacles that might hinder our movement during the mission, but even so, we still accomplish the mission."

The vigor demonstrated by each Soldier is a direct reflection of the pride they have in their job, even if it is not their original military occupational specialty.

The platoon is comprised of mostly tankers, but the Soldiers had to trade in their tracked vehicles for Humvees when they arrived at Anaconda.

"These Soldiers understand their mission is unconventional, in terms of what they were trained to do," he said. "Even so, they are prepared to meet, close with, and destroy their enemies no matter what vehicles they are mounted on."

Although many of the troops in the unit admit they miss their tanks, they said they adapt and overcome to function in whatever capacity the military sees fit.

"We serve because we believe in our country and everything it stands for," Newlin said, adding that his Soldiers are completely dedicated to what they do over here.

He said the Soldiers in the unit are like a family with everyone counting on each other.

"Our morale is high when everybody is in good spirits, and the morale is low when someone in the platoon isn't happy," he said. "We share our feelings as would any family because of the trust we have in each other."

That trust and loyalty is important. It is what gets the unit through the long nights outside the base walls, he said.

The unit sometimes spends days away from the LSA while contractors offload the supplies from the trucks, and restocks them with cargo for the return trip. The Gunslingers take full advantage of the opportunity to experience life at other forward operating bases.

Many of the Soldiers head right to the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation facility to start up a game of ping-pong, which has become somewhat of a tradition for them.

Newlin said that after being on the road for so many hours, it takes awhile for the adrenaline to subside. Instead of going to sleep right away, they find a place to relax and unwind.

But when the sun comes up, the Soldier's heads are down on their pillows trying to squeeze in some much-needed rest before waking up and doing it all over again.

Although the job may seem demanding and tiring, the Gunslingers are always eager to get back out on the road.

"The hardest part of my job is not having a mission," said Spc. William Thomas, a driver in the unit.

Thomas said it is agonizing not knowing when the next mission will pop up. It is simply a waiting game until it is time for them to hop in their vehicles for another night of "Ridin' Dirty."



Kellogg, Brown & Root trucks line up inside C. Co., 1st Battalion, 34th Armor Regiment, motor pool for the convoy briefing. The unit provides convoy security for the civilian contractors transporting military cargo throughout Iraq.



Spc. Brien Buckentine, a medic with the unit, hops on the top of the Humvee to do some last minute checks. Buckentine checks the weapon's system and makes sure the turret is clean and operational.



Spc. Jon Nelson, an Armored Security Vehicle driver with the C. Co. 1-34th Armor Regiment, takes advantage of the sunlight to perform pre-combat checks. In just a few hours, as darkness sweeps over the post, the unit will be ready to roll out the gates.



# 06' An Anaconda CHRISTMAS



The Saints in the Sands, the Anaconda Gospel Mass Choir, sings the final song during the "A Star in the Desert" Christmas celebration on Dec. 25 at the East MWR Recreation Center for more than 400 people.



Soldiers at Dining Facility 1 remembered those killed in Iraq during the past year with a Christmas dinner place for each armed forces service, contractor, civilian, and local national with their respective headgear.



The 1034th Corps Service Support Battalion Command Sgt. Maj. Tim Saylor, from Iowa City Iowa, serves Christmas meals to Soldiers on LSA Anaconda.



Soldiers assigned to the 32nd Multifunctional Medical Battalion enjoy laughter, food and good times during their Christmas Day party at the East MWR Recreation Facility on Anaconda.



Staff Sgt. Tiffany Faussett and Dance Ministry leader, Sherwin Straker, both members of the Radical Praise Dancers perform during the Christmas gospel celebrations at the East MWR Recreation Center on LSA Anaconda.



Col. Glenn Grothe, the operations officer for the 13th SC(E) and the 13th SC(E) deputy commander officer Col. Christine Gayagas, greet Soldiers during the Christmas evening gospel concert on Anaconda.



# ‘Santa’s Helper’ delivers gifts to foreign-nationals at Taji

by Spc. Nathan J. Hoskins

## 1st Air Cavalry Brigade PAO

**CAMP TAJI, Iraq** – One of the toughest times of the deployment for Soldiers is normally the holidays, but it isn’t just Soldiers who are homesick and miss their loved ones.

Crivitz, Wis., native Spc. Nicole Daly, a motor vehicle operator, for the 1157th Transportation Battalion, Wisconsin Army National Guard, assigned to the 15th Sustainment Brigade, a subordinate brigade to the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), headquartered at LSA Anaconda, near Balad, Iraq, sees the smiling faces of the men who work at the “bag farm,” a bulk fuel resupply point where the fuel containers look like oversized bags.

These employees are third country nationals who are from the Philippines, said Daly. “They celebrate Christmas just like you and me. They even have Christmas tree competitions and give gifts,” Daly said. “I know that they all have families back home and they all want to be home just like everybody here wants to be home for the holidays. They work hard there for 15 hours a day.”

The large influx of care packages to the



Photo by Spc. Nathan J. Hoskins

**Spc. Nicole Daly, a motor vehicle operator, cuts some packaging paper that will cover a care package Christmas present that will be handed out to a third country national working at the bulk fuel resupply point at Camp Taji, Iraq.**

1157th gave the idea to Daly’s squad leader, Appleton, Wis., native Sgt. Dominic Renteria, a motor vehicle operator, to give away the extras. That is when she took the idea and ran with it – sprinted with it, in fact.

“We have a lot of care packages that we get from people all over the place. We have rooms full of stuff and there’s no way we can use that in nine months,” said Daly.

“I got the idea to put together smaller care packages and wrapping them and giving them to the third country nationals there – giving it to them so that they can celebrate Christmas, too.”

Daly put up fliers in the mail room for boxes of all shapes and sizes and received a good response. She then filled those boxes with crossword puzzles, books, DVDs, coffee mugs, candies, cookies and more. Some of them even have baseballs and squirt guns, she said.

With a total of 60 boxes, the cost to gift wrap all of these was extremely high, so Daly, the battalion’s area beautification specialist, decided on another method.

“I got brown packaging and I drew pictures on the outside of every box. They each have their own personalized card [too]. We work with them every day so we know [all their names],” she said.

Along with the 60 care package gifts, Daly has gathered up enough Christmas stockings so that every one of the base camp workers will get one.

Before heading out to Iraq for her deployment, Daly did not dabble much in charity work.

“I think this is the coolest thing I’ve ever done. I’ve never been [involved in] charitable things,” she said.

There is always a first time for everything, and for Daly, being able to bring cheer to someone else’s life brings with it her own feelings of joy.

“That morning when we get there and they’re expecting it to be like any other day . . . It will probably be the first gift they’ve gotten in months,” she said. “To be able to be the person who can hand them that gift – moments like that make it worthwhile.”

Along with bringing Christmas cheer to the third-country nationals working at the base camp, as her unit’s Morale, Welfare and Recreation representative, Daly feels it is her job to keep her fellow Soldiers’ spirits high this holiday season.

“We have our Christmas party on Christmas Day and I’ll be setting up for that,” she said. “I’m the motivator. I have to put out the word and make people want to go. A lot of people want to sit in their rooms and just be alone. My part in it is making them want to go, making them want to get up and get out of their room and make the best of the situation.”

## SAVED, from Page 1

“Everyone did exactly what they were trained to do in this situation,” he said. “They stayed focused and helped me and other Soldiers get to safety.”

The Muskogee, Okla. native was struck

in the hip by a piece of shrapnel which was stopped by the thick rigger belt he had on at the time.

“The medic said that if the belt had not stopped the metal from entering my body, it would have caused serious complications,” he said. “The explosion was so violent that it

ripped my gun mount from the turret.”

The husband and father of one, Davis received cuts and bruises on his face from the explosion and metal pieces from his damaged turret.

“After the explosion, I dropped down into the vehicle for safety and began checking the passenger in the back seat,” he said. “And at the same time he was checking me for injuries.”

During the attack, Davis said his vehicle began to smoke due to a suspected fire under the hood and his battle buddies in the convoy responded quickly.

“We were trained to set a secure perimeter for Soldiers in a disabled vehicle to move to, and my battle buddies sprung into action instantly,” he said. “I was treated by a medical specialist, who rides in all of our convoys and transported back to the forward operating base.”

Pfc. Kristy Cannoy, the medic who administered aid to Davis, said her training was essential.

“We are trained to react to injured Soldiers and treat them without hesitation,” she said. “And with the extensive training we receive during battle simulation training, I was confident I was able to take care of the Soldier and get him transported to safety quickly.”

Cannoy, who graduated advanced indi-

vidual training in May, said this was her first time treating a Soldier who was injured during a mission outside of the FOB.

“This is my job, and this is what I was trained to do,” she said. “I was ready for this situation before I deployed to Iraq, and I continue to train to ensure I am ready for more situations later in the deployment.”

Davis said the quick reaction of the driver Spc. Lacyde Arnold, who was also injured during the attack, helped him and the passenger in the back seat exit the vehicle quickly, despite all of the confusion. He pointed out the importance of being prepared and taking training seriously.

“Almost everyone in my unit is trained to operate in any position in the vehicle,” Davis said. “We are not only capable of operating in any position, we also know what responsibilities each position has in the case of an emergency and that helped us through this situation without having more Soldiers injured.”

Davis sustained cuts to his face and lips, a bruised hip and a minor concussion from the incident and he said he feels lucky to not have been hurt worse.

“I love my IBA and protective equipment,” he said. “I should be an example to all Soldiers that this equipment works and it can only help you if you have it on properly.”



Photos by Sgt. Kevin McSwain

**Spc. Austin Davis looks over the damage done to his vehicle caused by an explosive device during a convoy in Mosul, Iraq. Davis sustained minor injuries and attributes his good fortune to wearing his protective equipment.**

# LSA ANACONDA RELIGIOUS SCHEDULE

Religious schedule subject to change

## Roman Catholic Mass

Saturday 5 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel  
Saturday 8 p.m. Provider Chapel  
Sunday 7:30 a.m. Freedom Chapel  
Sunday 9 a.m. Tuskegee Chapel  
Sunday 5:30 p.m. Provider Chapel  
Sunday 11 a.m. Air Force Hospital  
Monday - Friday 5 p.m. Tuskegee  
**Sacrament of Reconciliation**  
30 minutes prior to each mass  
**Protestant-Contemporary**  
Sunday 10 a.m. Town Hall  
**Latter Day Saints**

Sunday 1 p.m. Provider Chapel  
Sunday 4 p.m. Freedom Chapel  
Sunday 7 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel  
**Church of Christ**  
Sunday 2 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel  
**Islamic Prayer**  
Friday 12:30 p.m. Provider Chapel  
**Samoan Congregational Service**  
Sunday 4 p.m. Provider Chapel  
**Friday Shabbat Service**  
Friday 7 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel  
**Protestant-Gospel**  
Sunday, 11 a.m. MWR East Building

Sunday 11:30 a.m. Freedom Chapel  
Sunday 2 p.m. Air Force Hospital Chapel  
Sunday 7 p.m. Provider Chapel  
**Protestant Praise and Worship**  
Sunday 9 a.m. MWR East Building  
Sunday 9 a.m. Eden Chapel  
Sunday 7 p.m. Freedom Chapel  
Sunday 7:30 p.m. Eden Chapel  
Wednesday 7 p.m. Freedom Chapel  
**Protestant-Traditional**  
Sunday 9:30 a.m. Air Force Hospital  
Sunday 9:30 a.m. Provider Chapel  
Sunday 10 a.m. Freedom Chapel

Sunday 5:30 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel  
Sunday 8:15 p.m. Air Force Hospital  
**Non-Denominational**  
Sunday 9 a.m. Signal Chapel  
**Non-Denominational Spanish**  
Sunday 2 p.m. Freedom Chapel  
**Protestant-Gospel**  
Sunday 3:30 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel  
**Protestant-Liturgical**  
Sunday 11 a.m. Tuskegee Chapel



**January 3****Aerobics**

6 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**Yoga**

6 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**Boxing**

7:30 to 9 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**Rock Climbing Class**

8 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**8-Ball Tourney**

8 p.m.  
West Recreation Center

**Madden '05**

8 p.m.  
West Recreation Center

**9-Ball Tourney**

8 p.m.  
East Rec Center

**DJ Classes**

8 p.m.  
East Rec Center

**January 4****Tae Kwon Do**

7 to 8:30 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**NOGI Jiu-Jitsu**

9 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**Level 2 Swim Lessons**

7 p.m.  
Indoor Pool

**Level 1 Swim Lessons**

8 p.m.  
Indoor Pool

# ANACONDA ACTIVITIES

Your one-stop connection to activities around LSA Anaconda  
to add your activity to the event calendar, email [anaconda.times@balad.iraq.centcom.mil](mailto:anaconda.times@balad.iraq.centcom.mil)

**Battlefield Ground**

8 p.m.  
East Rec Center

**January 5****Aerobics**

5:30 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**Boxing**

7:30 to 9 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**Chess Tourney**

8 p.m.  
West Recreation Center

**4-4 Volleyball Tourney**

8 p.m.  
West MWR Fitness Center

**Caribbean Dance**

8 p.m.  
East Rec Center

**January 6****Aerobics**

noon to 1 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**Open Court Volleyball**

6 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**500m Fins/Kickboard**

9 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.  
Indoor Pool

**Texas Hold'em**

8 p.m.  
West Recreation Center

**Aerobics**

8 p.m.  
West MWR Fitness Center

**Salsa Dance**

8 p.m.  
East Rec Center

**Tae Kwon Do**

7 to 8:30 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**NOGI Jiu-Jitsu**

9 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**Level 2 Swim Lessons**

7 p.m.  
Indoor Pool

**Level 1 Swim Lessons**

8 p.m.  
Indoor Pool

**Command & Conquer**

8 p.m.  
West Recreation Center

**Dodgeball Tourney**

8 p.m.  
West MWR Fitness Center

**Texas Hold'em**

8 p.m.  
East Rec Center

**January 7****Aerobics**

5:30 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**Boxing**

7:30 to 9 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**100m Butterfly**

10 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.  
Indoor Pool

**Spades Tourney**

8 p.m.  
West Recreation Center

**4-4 Volleyball Tourney**

8 p.m.  
West MWR Fitness Center

**Caribbean Dance**

8 p.m.  
East Rec Center

**January 8****Aerobics**

noon to 1 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**Open Court Volleyball**

6 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**One-Mile Swim Race**

10 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.  
Indoor Pool

**Texas Hold'em**

8 p.m.  
West Recreation Center

**Aerobics**

8 p.m.  
West MWR Fitness Center

**Salsa Dance**

8 p.m.  
East Rec Center

**January 9****Open Court Volleyball**

6 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**Tae Kwon Do**

7 to 8:30 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu**

9 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**Green Bean Karaoke**

8 p.m.  
Green Bean Coffee Shop

**5-5 Basketball Tourney**

8 p.m.  
West MWR Fitness Center

**Poker**

8 p.m.  
East Rec Center

**January 10****Aerobics**

6 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**Boxing**

7:30 to 9 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**Rock Climbing Class**

8 p.m.  
East MWR Fitness Center

**One-Hour Swim-A-Thon**

Two-Person Teams  
5:30 a.m.  
Outdoor Pool

**Jam Session**

8 p.m.  
West Recreation Center

**Aerobics**

8 p.m.  
West MWR Fitness Center

# 196,850

the number of inches in the Martin Luther King Run

Jan. 15 at 6:30 a.m. at Holt Memorial Stadium

register between Jan. 2 and 12 at any MWR fitness facility



2 3 3 4 6 6 7 8 8

	-		X	=	6
+		+		X	
	-		X		= 9
-		/		-	
	X		-		= 8
=		=		=	
5		7		3	

Fill in the diagrams by putting the groups of letters VERTICALLY into their squares. The letters in each group must remain in the same order. The groups are given in jumbled order. When finished, you will be able to read a saying ACROSS the rows in each diagram.

OGAAAH

[illegible]

TTTAIH

[illegible][illegible]

A E E E  
I I L L L  
O R R U  
Y Y

[illegible]

Find your way from START to FINISH by passing through all the white squares one time only. You may move up, down, and across, but not diagonally.

											FINISH		

5 p.m. Casino Royale (PG-13)  
8 p.m. Eragon (PG)



# The changing face of communications on Anaconda

by Spc. Amanda Solitario

## Anaconda Times Staff

**LSA ANACONDA, Iraq**—Communicating on a battlefield has become much easier over the years. With Internet and telephone access, gone are the days of the Pony Express. Still, Soldiers are working hard to make connections faster and more secure for the troops.

Inajointendeavorbetweenvarious signal units and civilian contractors, Anaconda is undergoing a major communication transformation in an attempt to upgrade outdated systems.

“We are trying to offer better communications, more reliable service, and without interruptions,” said Chief Warrant Officer John Proctor, a network technician with the 160th Signal Brigade. “We want to make it more like what people have at home.”

When American troops first came to Iraq in 2003, hasty communication systems were set up to accommodate the beginning efforts of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Proctor, from Albany, Ga., said the way things are set up right now is not practical for the logistical missions of today’s Soldiers.

“The previous effort was good, but it was wired in a tactical configuration and manner, and intended as a temporary or short-term solution,” said Lt. Col. Micheal Walton, the public affairs officer (forward) for the 335th Signal

Command (Theater).

The 335th SC (T) headquartered at Camp Afrija, Kuwait, is working with their subordinate units to fix the problems. They recently sent a “dream team,” a group of four Soldiers from the 160th Signal Brigade from Camp Afrija, Kuwait, to Anaconda to evaluate the operations.

“We are here to assess the situation to make sure everything is ready to come on line,” said Chief Warrant Officer Edwin Crews, a network technician with the 335th SC (T).

The major problem the team found was a daisy-chained arrangement for Internet connections. If one building loses connection, the other offices on the network go offline as well, Proctor said.

Some of the other effects servicemembers may experience include slower Internet speeds, complete loss of communications, or failed attempts on the phone.

As the new system slowly makes its way to the surface, all of these problems will disappear.

“The biggest change will come when a person accesses the Internet or places a phone call from their location,” Walton said. “Calls will go through faster, with fewer busy signals, and Internet pages will load faster.”

General Dynamics is the civilian company contracted by the military to untangle old wires and replace them with new ones. They are

working closely with the 324th and the 67th signal battalions here on post to rewire more than 50 buildings.

GD is in the process of installing a fiber optic ring around the base. This ring will connect to Automated Distribution Nodes around the post. Each building will run off one of these ADNs, essentially combating the daisy-chain affect.

“Since the military utilizes many web-based applications and interfaces to do everything from ordering parts and food to paying military members and civilians, the increased amount of signal will mean an increase in productivity,” Walton said.

As part of the commercialization, servicemembers may be asked to move from their offices. Walton said communication closets are being put into all buildings to allow quick access to all essential equipment.

“These rooms ensure that communications remain reliable and to prevent tampering,” Walton said. “Much like the engine of a car is isolated from the driver, the telecommunications closet provides that secure enclosure.”

Walton said this project is not an easy undertaking. It is an ongoing development and is operating in phases. While there is not a definitive timeline for completion, it is believed that newer, faster, and more effective communications at Anaconda will be in place by the end of the summer.



(Clockwise from above) Three Soldiers work together to hoist another out of a manhole filled with old communication wires. Anaconda is in the process of a communication upgrade. Staff Sgt. Nelson Ashbrook, an information systems technician with the 324th Signal Battalion, and Staff Sgt. James Burks, a switch operator with the unit, close the cover to a manhole before moving on the next. Staff Sgt. Nelson Ashbrook, an information systems technician with the 324th Signal Battalion, pulls a heavy cable from the ground while Staff Sgt. James Burks, a switch operator with the unit, helps in the process.



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# One tree at a time...

## Soldiers extend olive branch to Iraqi people

story by Spc. Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown

**LSA ANACONDA, Iraq**—The olive tree. It has long held deep-seeded symbolism in several cultures; the crown of Olympic champions in ancient Greece, a sign of peace in Christian and Jewish faiths, and an icon of the Prophet Mohammed in Islam.

Shajarat zaytun in Arabic, the olive tree is very hearty and long-lived, and can survive in conditions of almost total neglect. The tree is not especially remarkable in appearance or stature, but its meaning and practical use is where this little tree leaves its mark.

A few centuries of symbolism combined with three Iraqi citizens, two U.S. Army colonels, and one Army Reserve unit, and you are left with a lasting legacy of the partnership between U.S. forces and the people of Iraq.

On Dec. 23, a ceremony was held by the 164th Corps Support Group which falls under the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), to begin the planting of 164 olive trees on Anaconda.

"The olive tree is a symbol of peace and this is the message we want to leave the citizens of Iraq," said Master Sgt. Patricia A. Marsano, the

field ordering officer for the 164th.

The Crestline, Ohio native said the olive tree project was a challenge from her command to leave her unit's area on Anaconda better than how they found it.

"There are so many trees dying around here, so we researched what kind would survive best in this environment.

Also, it's the symbol of peace which we all hope for," Marsano said. She said the unit thought



**Master Sgt. Patricia Marsano, a field ordering officer, assigned to the 164th Corps Support Group, Army Reserve unit based in Mesa, Ariz., plants a single tree during an olive tree planting ceremony with Iraqi civilians and American Soldiers on Dec. 23 on Logistical Support Area Anaconda, near Balad, Iraq.**

trees would be a fitting gesture for both their practical use in this country and their symbolism.

Marsano, along with the help of 1st Sgt. Roberto Galicia of Ontario, Calif., also of the 164th, approached the California Rare Fruit Growers, Inc., in September, and submitted the request for a donation of olive trees to plant in Iraq.

The CRFG responded with great interest in assisting the Soldiers and set out to find a grower who would help with the project. In the end, 164 olive trees of five different varieties were sent to Iraq via Federal Express, who footed the shipping bill.

The trees were shipped Dec. 7 and arrived on Anaconda in time to be planted as an unconventional kind of Christmas tree.

"It holds extra meaning, especially this time of year ... it is the spirit of giving," Marsano said.

At the ceremony, three trees

were planted; two by U.S. Army colonels, and one by a group of three Iraqi citizens who work on the base. The remainder of the 164 trees will be planted along Anaconda's main road, Pennsylvania Avenue, within the next few days.

Maithan Saeed, an Iraqi citizen and translator on the base, was one of the three Iraqis who took part in the ceremony.

"It's a small contract for friends," Saeed said of the trees. From the small town of Dujail near Balad, Saeed grew up in a farming area and knows the worth of this versatile tree.

Olive is a staple of the Iraqi diet. The fruit's oil can be used for cooking, lamp oil, cosmetics, and medicine, and the tree bears strong timber. The versatility of the tree, and the fact that every part of it can be used, demonstrate how the plant is invaluable to the Iraqi people.

"We respect this tree because it came from heaven," Saeed said of the tree's significance in the Muslim faith.

Saeed, who has been an interpreter for U.S. troops for two years and a security guard on this base before then, said the act shows the friendship between the two nations.

"I believe there is too much wrong in this country," Saeed said of why he wanted to work for the Americans. Since coming to work on Anaconda, Saeed has been shot at twice on visits to his village and can no longer return to his own home. He is currently working on obtaining a visa to the United States where he may be awarded American citizenship for aiding the troops here.

Just in time for Christmas, this gesture can be an example of how future relations in Iraq would hope to be seen. Hearty, strong, and lasting as the olive tree.

"It represents the very essence of why we serve, and ultimately represents the hope for this nation, and for the peaceful existence of all the people of Iraq," said Col. Megan P. Tatu, commander of the 164th.

Simultaneously on this day in a different time zone, the CRFG orchestrated a planting in San Luis Obispo, Calif., to demonstrate the gift of peace from the American people, to their Iraqi counterparts.







*Spc. Jarrod Armstrong removes head light assembly from armored security vehicle.*



*Tools of the trade.*

# Mechanics keep command staff moving

story by Sgt. Kevin McSwain / photos by Staff Sgt. Angela Archie



*Spc. Jarrod Armstrong loosens the front head light wiring harness.*

**LSA ANACONDA, Iraq**—Metal clanging, wrenches turning, and the musical group Papa Roach blasting in the background is all in a day's work for the Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company motor pool.

"We service and maintain the vehicles for the HHC and insure they are mission ready at all times," said Sgt. Gary Postlewait, senior vehicle mechanic with HHC 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary). "We have to identify problems before they become serious."

Postlewait accomplishes this mission with just over ten Soldiers in his crew — with four of them from different military occupational specialties.

"I have two generator mechanics, a fueler, and a chemical equipment repair specialist in my crew," he said.

Postlewait said despite the challenge of having a large part of his staff from different parts of the Army, they still get the job done.

"We do a lot of on the job training," he said. "And my Soldiers are very motivated and ready to learn anything that helps make our motor pool better."

Many of the Soldiers on the staff feel they have learned a lot since they have been



*Sgt. Gary Postlewait insulates newly spliced wires with electrical tape.*

deployed here.

"I am a fueler, but I have been working in the motor pool for a while," said Spc. Jarrod Armstrong. "And I have learned a lot from Sgt. Postlewait."

The Cabot, Ark. native said Postlewait is the most knowledgeable Soldier in the motor pool and they learn a lot from him.

Postlewait said as he trains his Soldiers, he finds what each one is good at and he tries to place them in the best position to excel.

"As in any shop, everyone is good at something or likes doing certain jobs more

than others," he said. "All I had to do was work with them for a while and find where they would be the most productive."

Postlewait attributes the success of the crew to their willingness to learn and ask questions during each training session.

"Everyone on the team is good about asking questions when they do not understand something," he said. "I try to explain the logic behind why we are fixing or replacing a part on a vehicle so they can see why it is important to fix the problem, not just the part."



*Pfc. Jeremy Mann steadily loosens a bolt on the front axle of a Humvee.*



*Spc. Jarrod Armstrong and Sgt. Postlewait team up to prepare wiring for additional light fixture.*